What Do We Mean by Great Power or Superpower?
An Introduction to Concepts and Terms

Ed Erickson, PhD

Abstract: This article serves as an introduction to what is generally meant by such terms as *great power*, *superpower*, *hyperpower*, *middleweight power*, *power of world influence*, *regional hegemon*, and *new great power*, as well as what is meant by the term *balance of power* in the context of national power relationships. This article also provides a brief chronological explanation of when these terms are used historically, the measurements by which nations are added or dropped from the category, and some observations about the utility of such a vocabulary. The article concludes with contemporary understandings that increasingly include such factors as attitudes, concepts, language, and modes of life as essential capabilities in assessing national power.

Keywords: great powers, new great powers, superpowers, balance of power, hyperpower, national power

There is vast, extant literature regarding the conceptual notion of great powers; however, for the purposes of this article, the author has selected three books as representative of how scholars during the past 50 years have come to their understandings of the terms. These books are A. J. P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918*; Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*; and Goedele De Keersmaeker's *Polarity, Balance of Power and Interna-*

Dr. Edward J. Erickson is a scholar-in-residence at the Clark Center for Global Engagement at the State University of New York at Cortland. He is a retired professor of military history from the Marine Corps University.

tional Relations Theory: Post-Cold War and 19th Century Compared.[1] The author recommends these books, which are engagingly well-written, as starting points for readers new to the field.[2]

The phrase *great power* first appears academically in 1833 in an essay by German historian Leopold von Ranke, titled "The Great Powers."[3] He wrote that "the general course of history, he [von Ranke] concluded, was from the late seventeenth century conditioned by shifting power constellations among the great powers, not simply by constellations among all European nations. The great powers (France, England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia) were in turn conditioned by their specific domestic conditions."[4] Von Ranke also advanced in his lectures and writings the concept of the *balance of power*.[5] Notably, he also limited his ideas to European nations. Von Ranke's fundamental concepts—shifting relationships, balance of power, domestic strength, and Eurocentric inclusion—distinguished the field until the post–Second World War period. During the Cold War, the term *superpower* replaced the term *great power* which, in turn, was replaced in the early 1990s by a new term, *hyperpower* (used to identify exclusively the United States). In the twenty-first century, other terms, such as *power of world influence*, *regional hegemon*, and *new great power*, have entered the vocabulary of power relationships.

This article serves as an introduction to what is generally meant by such terms as *great power*, *superpower*, *hyperpower*, *middleweight power*, *power of world influence*, *regional hegemon*, and *new great power*, as well as what is meant by the term *balance of power* in the context of national power relationships. This article also provides a brief chronological explanation of when these terms are used historically, the measurements by which nations are added or dropped from the category, and some observations about the utility of such a vocabulary. Readers will note that, in the past, ideas about these matters devolved to the capability and capacity to wage war by projecting military power or to the ability to influence other nations in some coercive way. Finally, the article concludes with contemporary understandings that increasingly include factors such as attitudes, concepts, language, and modes of life as essential capabilities in assessing national power.

Measuring "Power"

Taylor, Kennedy, and De Keersmaeker published their books in 1954, 1987, and 2016 and, while they differ topically and thematically, all three rely on the quantifiable analysis of economic (industrial and raw materials), financial (gross domestic product and military expenditures), demographic (populations and capabilities), and military (numbers of weapons systems) tabular data. We point this out because, while there is no precise universally accepted definition for the term great power, there appear to be universally accepted standards by which a

great power is measured. Assessments of resources as noted above, both natural and man-made, are a unitary theme in the literature of this subject. The three authors above reflect this dynamic.

When assessing the impact of specific resources, we might also note that, according to historians MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, five military revolutions have occurred since the world moved out of medieval times.[6] Chronologically, these revolutions hinged on the understanding, and marshaling in militarily useful ways, of the following resources: financial, demographic, industrial, the combination of the preceding three to wage attritional warfare, and scientific. It cannot be understated how closely changes in great power status and relationships mirror Knox and Murray's periodization of changes in military affairs (table 1).

The ability of a nation to recognize and adapt to military revolutions coincides with what is commonly called the rise and fall of great powers. Combining these ideas, the importance of mobilizing national resources in a utilitarian way, both natural and man-made, is a critical determinant in achieving or losing great power status. Scholars exploring this subject (illustrated by the work of Taylor, Kennedy, and Goedele De Keersmaeker, for example), at some point invariably gravitate toward the measurement and use of resources to support their arguments.

The Emergence of Great Powers

Paul Kennedy begins his classic work around 1500, however, we begin here with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 as the defining genesis of the term the *Great Powers of Europe*.[7] The treaty ended the Thirty Years' War between the Roman Catholic and Protestant powers of Europe. It is notable historically for establishing the principle of sovereign states (also establishing the idea of

Table 1. Military revolutions according to Knox and Murray

Military revolution 1:	The seventeenth-century creation of the modern state and modern military institutions (centralized state financing enabled nation-states to field professional gunpowder armies)
Military revolution 2:	The French Revolution (conscription and national mobilization led to armies and navies on a scale previously unseen)
Military revolution 3:	The Industrial Revolution (the factory system enabled the arming of huge forces with mass-produced weapons)
Military revolution 4:	The First World War (the irrevocable combination of its three predecessors that enabled the waging of long-term, attritional, total war)
Military revolution 5:	The Nuclear Age (nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles created the capability to destroy nations)

Source: MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300–2050 *(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13–14.*

nation-states) as well as European norms of noninterference in another state's domestic affairs. Importantly, it established the concept of a balance of power designed to keep the peace in Europe by creating conditions that made aggression between nation-states very difficult.

In addressing the treaty of 1648, A. J. P. Taylor illustrated how quickly great powers can either attain or lose great power status:

> Of the Powers indisputably ranked as Great at the Congress of Westphalia in 1648, three—Sweden, Holland, and Spain—ceased to be Great and one—Poland—ceased to exist before the close of the eighteenth century; their place was taken by Russia and Prussia, two states hardly within notice a hundred years before.[8]

In understanding why this happened, Kennedy asserted that it is the interaction between leading states striving to enhance their wealth and power that explains these changes. He argued that "the relative strengths of the leading nations in world affairs never remain constant, principally because of the uneven rate of growth among different societies and of the technological and organizational breakthroughs which bring a greater advantage to one society than to another."[9] Therefore, there are a variety of factors that determine a nation's great power status.

Regardless of the chronological point of origin of the term *great powers*, the extant literature relies on tabular data to establish the resources needed to become a great power and to maintain great power status. In this foundational period, scholars measured such variables as increases in military manpower, wartime expenditures and revenues, and the size of armies and navies. In this way, it became possible to measure capability (what could be done) and capacity (the extent to which something could be done) in both absolute and relative terms.[10] This led then to the ability of scholars to weigh variables and rank order power.

The Emergence of the Balance of Power

Taylor attributed the long periods of general peace in Europe to the maintenance of the balance of power.[11] The idea of such a balance of power emerged in European diplomacy at the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 when the participating states formed a European system designed to counter the hegemonic ambitions of the French king, Louis XIV, whose repeated wars had endangered the status quo. This period in European history was marked by the establishment of coalitions designed to keep France in check but which also served to prevent continental-scale wars (as the Thirty Years' War had been). This is not to say that localized state-on-state war did not occur, and there were three such wars that changed the status of great power nations.

The United Kingdom emerged as a great power with the conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession (formalized by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713), an event that would prove to have profound consequences for both Europe and for the world. Spain's decline began about this time, and within 50 years, it was finished as a great power. Spain's dilemma was that continual wars and the costs of its empire drained the treasury, which was dependent on the American colonies producing gold and silver. In the end, Spain's small population and lack of a viable domestic economy reduced it to penury.

Swedish power peaked under King Charles XII, but his military campaigns led to disastrous defeat in 1721 in the Great Northern War. Sweden's small military and naval forces were excellent but fragile in that the tiny population and economy could not replace losses. The overextension into an endless campaign in Russia led to the defeat of Sweden and to the emergence of Romanov Russia as a great power. Sweden would continue to be an important second-tier power through the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15). Likewise, 50 years later, the Dutch joined the ranks of the second-tier powers after the British defeated the United Provinces (Holland) in the Third Anglo-Dutch War of 1674. Holland's decline had begun earlier in a series of wars that forced it to field both an army and a navy.

Unfortunately, Poland also left the field permanently when the powerful absolute monarchs of Prussia, Russia, and Austria-Hungary conspired and orchestrated the partition of the country in 1795, destroying it as a nation-state until its resurrection in 1919. Thus, by the time of the French Revolution in 1789, the great powers consisted of Austria-Hungary, the United Kingdom, France, Prussia, and Russia. In turn, the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte after 1799 reinforced the formation of new European coalitions designed to prevent French hegemony on the continent.

The wars of Napoleon further confirmed the status of the existing great powers of Europe. The French emperor crushed Prussia, Spain, and Austria-Hungary in 1806, 1807, and 1809, respectively.[12] Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812 led to a European-wide coalition that ended his dreams of European hegemony. Because of Lazare Carnot's innovations in national mobilization and conscription in this period, modern scholars added populations and per capita income to their growing list of variables by which to calculate power relationships and rank ordering.

The Congress of Vienna 1815 and the Concert of Europe

Engineered by Austro-Hungarian foreign minister prince Klemens von Metternich, the Congress of Vienna concluded a 20-year period of nearly continuous warfare between the European nations and France. The signatories included

Austria-Hungary, the United Kingdom, France, Prussia, and Russia, as well as second-tier powers Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. In terms of European stability, the most important outcome of the congress was the establishment of what has been called the *Concert of Europe*. This term encompassed a system of cooperation based on a soon-to-be-defunct great power alliance, overlapping agreements and treaties, and the willpower of Metternich himself. Metternich's system was designed keep France at bay by maintaining a balance of power that pitted at least three of the four other great powers opposite France. France briefly joined the alliance but withdrew. Metternich also was keenly aware of the economically and socially driven unhappiness of the lower classes of European nations and simmering rebellious intentions of captive minorities living under the dynastic empires. In turn, Metternich mobilized the fears of European monarchs and governments to agree to support one another in crushing revolutionary movements. The system triumphantly emerged from a continent-wide wave of revolutions in 1835 and 1848 by ensuring that the reigning governments and dynasties remained in power.

The Crimean War (1853–56) brought the United Kingdom and France into armed conflict with Russia, but the war proved to be inconclusive and not particularly expensive to any of its participants. The Concert of Europe endured and, in 1861, the unification of Italy created a sixth great power of Europe. At this point, Prussian foreign minister prince Otto von Bismarck crossed the stage of history by delivering the famous "Blood and Iron" speech to the Prussian Reichstag in 1863, proclaiming that German unification under Prussian leadership could only be achieved by using war as a foreign policy tool. In short order, Prussia waged and won the Danish-Prussian War of 1864, the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, allowing Bismarck to orchestrate German unification in 1871. The impact of Bismarck on the European system would be felt for the next 80 years.

Bismarck's Alliances and the Balance of Power

The defeat of France at the hands of Prussia and the German states upset a European balance of power that had been in place since the reign of Louis XIV. Indeed, the primacy of France and its unchallenged position as the most powerful nation in Europe had been the driving force in how European monarchs and diplomats thought about power relationships. Literally overnight a new Germany displaced France in the computations and alignment of the European balance of power.

Bismarck's name and reputation has long been associated with Prussian and German militarism. However, it is important to remember that after German unification Bismarck's activities increasingly turned to domestic policies designed to strengthen Germany internally. He also turned to the establishment

of a system of defensive alliances designed to protect the new nation. Beginning in 1873 with the Three Emperors' League (Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia), Bismarck subsequently created the Dual Alliance with Austria-Hungary in 1879. The Dual Alliance was designed to counterbalance a resurgent, angry, and heavily armed France, and it was purely defensive in nature. Bismarck's objective was to ensure that France would not attack Germany in an effort to recover lost provinces or simply for revenge. Unfortunately, an unforeseen consequence of this was that France sought an alliance with Russia, leading to a period of equating the balance of power in Europe with the strength and position of two opposing alliance systems. While the world was not what we might term *bipolar* in the sense of two superpowers, it is fair to assert that European security affairs from 1879 to 1914 were seen in terms of balancing alliance polarity.

The rise of the industrialized state, railroads, and mass production in this period led to scholars adding more variables for consideration in their calculations of power. In particular, coal, iron, and steel production became important, as did the relative share of world manufacturing output.[13] Census data and public disclosures of contracts and national budgets made it possible to measure the percentage of national income devoted to armaments and the per capita share necessary to maintain it.[14]

Although Kaiser Wilhelm II added colonialism and imperialism to the plate of German aspirations, Germany remained essentially rooted in European affairs. By 1914, the opposing alliances consisted of the Triple Entente composed of the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, which was counterbalanced by the Triple Alliance composed of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy. Thus, all six of the then great powers were tied to a bipolar interpretation of security affairs in Europe. Although Italy would initially remain neutral at the onset of the First World War, replaced by the second-tier Ottoman Empire, which joined the Germans and Austro-Hungarians, this system endured. Most historians also assert that the alliance system dragged somewhat reluctant great powers into an unwanted general war over a localized Balkan crisis between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.[15] In any case, including colonies in the equations, the Triple Entente powers had one-third more people, double the manufacturing capacity, and the immeasurable advantage of position and command of the seas against their opponents.

After the Ottomans entered the war in November 1914, the term *Central Powers*, composed of the three aforementioned participants (plus the Bulgarians) replaced the term Triple Alliance, while the Triple Entente members came to be called the Allies, which also included newcomer Japan. In 1917, Czarist Russia collapsed and the United States entered the war, bringing the net total of Allied resources to an even higher level of superiority. The war ended with

the Central Powers defeated and in a state of collapse. In the end, many historians attribute their defeat to exhaustion caused by a resource-deficient ability to wage long-term, attritional warfare.

The United States and Japan had since 1905 actually ranked as de facto great powers—Japan because it had defeated the Russians and acquired an empire in eastern Asia, and the United States because of its industrial strength and new blue water navy. However, both powers were essentially hemispheric in their approach to world affairs. The United States, in particular, had a long tradition of noninvolvement in European affairs.

The Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 reordered the great powers of Europe and another round of adding and dropping nations ensued. The somewhat larger number but clearly reordered great powers of 1919 consisted of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the Soviet Union or USSR), and the United States. Importantly, this is the point where the Euro-centricity of the term great powers became obsolete and was relegated to a historical curiosity. After 1919, the term great powers took on a global context, and we might note that in terms of measurable data, the inclusion of Italy became problematic.

The literature evaluating these matters begins to include aspects of technology and production capacity as these affect national power. By 1939, Italy, for example, had the trappings of a great power—a large army and navy, colonies, and power-projection capabilities (as demonstrated in the Spanish Civil War and the conquest of Ethiopia). However, as would be seen in the Second World War, Italy did not have the resources, especially in manufacturing capacity, to sustain itself under the demands of long-term, attritional warfare.

The Superpowers

The end of World War II concluded the great power system of multilateral national security that had existed since the reign of Louis XIV. The defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan led to their occupation and demilitarization; moreover, Germany lost one-third of its territory. The industrial base and infrastructure, as well as a massive amount of civilian housing of Germany and Japan, were destroyed by Allied strategic bombing. The United Kingdom and France, both victors in the war, were pauperized by the costs of the war and both faced restive colonial peoples in their overseas empires. China also was a victor, but it remained a populous but underdeveloped nation. Their reduction to second-tier status inevitably followed. This left the Soviet Union in a position of dominant supremacy in the Eurasian landmass and the United States in command of the seas and with a dominant air capability (including atomic bombs). The term *superpower* soon evolved to characterize the capability, capacity, and role of these two nations in the postwar world, which was also defined as bipolar.

The United Kingdom and France attempted to maintain the illusion that they remained great powers, at least until the mid-1950s, but after fighting a losing series of colonial wars they uneasily accepted their reduced position. The *balance of power* concept reemerged as the United States established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while the Soviet Union established an opposing Warsaw Pact. This period became known as the Cold War and was characterized as a wider view of the components of national power, which included nuclear weapons and intercontinental delivery systems but also encompassed puppet and client states, irregular warfare, and information warfare.

Through the acquisition of nuclear weapons, the United Kingdom and France reentered the field as middleweight powers possessing powerful but limited strategic reach and global influence. The establishment of a strong, centralized government in China led to its rise as an emerging regional power by the 1960s. China was soon joined by India, Israel, and Pakistan, which also acquired nuclear weapons, giving them powerful regional military capabilities. Approaching the end of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union maintained their status and position primarily through a large resource base, which enabled them to field both significant capability and almost unlimited capacity.

Much to the surprise of world leaders, military intelligence analysts, subject matter experts in security affairs, and the world population, the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 led directly and quickly to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Unlike previous changes in great power status, defeat in armed conflict did not cause the dissolution of the Soviet state. However, a strong argument can be made that the Soviets could not bear the financial costs of an extended period of confrontation with the United States in a Cold War. Many scholars feel that the command economy of the Soviet system proved inadequate to the task of maintaining a resource-based armaments competition with the United States.[16]

The Short but Unlamented Age of Hyperpower

In 1999, French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine defined the United States as a *hyperpower*, a new term that best described "a country that is dominant or predominant in all categories."[17]

Superpower, in Vedrine's view, was an obsolete Cold War term reflecting largely the military capabilities of both the Soviet Union and the United States. He asserted that "the breadth of American strength is unique, extending beyond economics, technology or military might to 'this domination of attitudes, concepts, language and modes of life'."[18] In essence, Vedrine added cultural power to the growing list of great power resources that could be mobilized to exert influence and power. Certainly, the influence and power of the United States at the dawn of the twenty-first century appeared unchallenged.

Vedrine went on to describe France as a *power of world influence*, a category that also included Germany, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, Japan, and India. This redefinition of power status is important because it signaled a shift in the interpretation of power from something essentially focused on military strength to something other than the physical resources necessary for waging war. While a case can be made that the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China remained military powers with global capability and reach, only Russia retained a capacity to match the American nuclear arsenal. No military argument can be made that Germany, Japan, or India had significant powers beyond their economic capabilities and capacity. There is no question, however, that these nations were significant in the calculus of power relationships and status entering the twenty-first century.

American interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 led to continuing long-term wars that drained its treasury and imposed crippling restrictions on the capability and capacity of its military and naval forces to respond to other crises. Continuing interventions after the Arab Spring in 2011 imposed further liabilities on already strained American military power by adding quasi-wars in Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, Niger, Yemen, and Syria to American commitments. The rise of a new American isolationism manifested itself in 2016 with the election of Donald J. Trump to the presidency on a promise of withdrawing from expensive overseas military adventures and protecting the American industrial base. It is clear that the United States no longer enjoys the resource advantage or the cultural supremacy predicted by the French foreign minister in 1999.

An associated term that emerged in this timeframe is *regional hegemon*, which is used to describe nations seeking to dominate adjacent geographic areas and geopolitical entities. Countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are considered aspiring regional hegemons. Whether these countries have the resources to match their aspirations remains to be seen. On a larger scale, Russia and China certainly have the resources to assert hegemony in the *near abroad* and the South China Sea, respectively.[19]

Conclusion: "What Comes Next?"

There is a growing literature concerning what will come next in defining and determining power status and power relationships in the coming century. Looking back at Paul Kennedy's work, the problem of predicting an uncertain future becomes immediately obvious. Kennedy predicted that the Soviet Union would gradually weaken and lose its position of superpower status, but he missed its imminent collapse. Likewise, Kennedy saw Japan as an emerging power whose power status would inevitably increase.[20]

In 2004, strategic thinker Thomas P. M. Barnett redefined power status

in terms of *new core powers*, whose strength lay in being inside a perimeter of integrated economies.[21] Security specialist George Friedman followed this by postulating in 2009 that Poland, Turkey, and Japan would emerge in the mid-twenty-first century as new great powers.[22] A recent article in the *American Interest* asserted that there are now eight great powers in the world. These are, in the order of power status from strongest to less strong: the United States, China, Japan, Russia, Germany, India, Iran, and Israel.[23] One might ask, how valid are these predictions and judgments? What tabular data and measurements support such assertions? How do we weight new capabilities and capacity measurements such as cyberspace, social media leveraging, nonstate mercenaries, and ideologies in our future assessments?

Other terms entered the vocabulary in the new century that offered nuanced understanding of power relationships. Professor John J. Mearsheimer, a noted international security policy specialist at the University of Chicago, advanced the idea of *offshore balancers* to describe the role of interventionist naval powers.[24] Mearsheimer noted similarities in the case of the United States in the early twentieth century that mirrored the case of the United Kingdom in earlier centuries in terms of the selective application of power projected from the sea. This changed, of course, after the Second World War with the permanent forward presence of American forces in Western Europe and northeast Asia. In this regard, Mearsheimer was careful to make the point that, during the postwar peace, the United States was committed to containment rather than to balancing power to maintain peace.[25]

We might circle back to Knox and Murray's thoughts on military revolutions and ask whether absolute or relative measurements of military capability and capacity are appropriate in an assessment of power status in the twenty-first century. Certainly nations like Germany, India, and Japan are not great powers as that word has been understood since 1648. Perhaps the world is on the cusp of a sixth military revolution, which includes some sort of a soft power approach that enables nations to exert influence and nonkinetic force in ways that redefine the character of war. If this is true, then we should ask how such attributes of non-hard power might be measured and assessed in the future security environment.

While *soft power* is a modern term, historians and theorists have been thinking about the issue since the nineteenth century. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than the ideas of American strategic thinker Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, who was a lecturer in naval history and tactics at the United States Naval War College from 1885 to 1896. In his seminal work, *The Influence of Sea Power on History*, Mahan advanced the idea that sea power rested on six general principal conditions: "1. Geographical position, 2. Physical conformation (including natural resources and climate), 3. Extent of territory, 4. Number of population, 5. Character of the people, 6. Character of the government (including national

institutions)."[26] Although Mahan's books concerned naval power, his assertion was that the character of both a people and their government had something to do with the creation of power potential beyond the physical realm. Mahan's ideas were harbingers of more sophisticated thinking about the nature and application of national power. In some ways, it is fair to state that Mahan's ideas were an earlier and less sophisticated form of Hubert Vedrine's remarks on attitudes, concepts, language, and modes of life as essential components of national power.

Several years after Mahan's seminal work, American historian Frederick Jackson Turner delivered a paper at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago titled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."[27] Known today as the "Frontier Thesis," Turner advanced the idea that Americans had been an inwardly focused people bent on taming the frontier and westward expansion. Jackson's corollary to this idea was, with the frontier essentially tamed in 1893, Americans would have to turn their ambitions outward and become more internationally engaged. While this may seem to be an obvious statement today, it was certainly less so to Jackson's audience and, similarly to Mahan's ideas—Jackson's thesis reflected the aspirations and character of a people more than their raw physical and geographical potential.

Combining these ideas, it seems clear that, while much of the discourse about great powers has rested on, and continues to rest on, objective assessments of measurable data of resources and technology, we must also pay attention to less well-defined intangibles. These intangibles might include, but are not limited to, the character and aspirations of a people, the form of government, a nation's culture, and the kinds of leaders that a culture produces. Therefore, rather than leave the reader with a defined thesis about power, this author is inclined to suggest that future assessments of national power must necessarily include subjective intangibles interwoven with objective measurements and information.

Notes

1. A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954); Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987); and Goedele De Keersmaeker, *Polarity, Balance of Power and International Relations Theory: Post-Cold War and 19th Century Compared* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
2. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, updated edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014) for an extremely readable introduction to these matters.
3. Ernst Schulin, "Ranke's Universal History and National History," *Syracuse Scholar* 9, no. 1 (1988).
4. Schulin, "Ranke's Universal History and National History," 4.
5. De Keersmaeker, *Polarity, Balance of Power and International Relations Theory*, 214.
6. MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, eds., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300–2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13–14.

7. The Treaty of Westphalia is generally accepted as the historical point where *nation-states* become a term of use in European affairs, which conforms to Murray and Knox's explanation of military revolutions.
8. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, xxii.
9. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers,* xv–xvi.
10. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, xiii.
11. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, xix.
12. David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1966), 443–502, 593–658, 663–732.
13. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, xiii.
14. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, xxviii–xxix.
15. For a representative narrative see, for example, Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 1–31.
16. Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 214.
17. "To Paris, U.S. Looks Like a 'Hyperpower'," *International Herald Tribune*, 5 February 1999.
18. "To Paris, U.S. Looks Like a 'Hyperpower'."
19. The *near abroad* is a Russian geopolitical term meaning the former Soviet Socialist Republics that comprised the USSR.
20. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers,* 446–72.
21. Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004), 107–90.
22. George Friedman, *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 212–23.
23. Walter Russell Mead and Sean Keely, "The Eight Great Powers of 2017," *American Interest*, 24 January 2017.
24. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 234–66.
25. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 265–66.
26. Alfred Thayer Man, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1890), 28–29.
27. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1921).